



FSA *Now*

The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff

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eCMO

In an effort to improve school compliance and program integrity, the School Eligibility Channel (SEC) is undertaking a new modernization project. eCMO will electronically integrate many of SEC's functions, enabling case workers to more efficiently and effectively fulfill their responsibilities.

SEC, formerly called Case Management and Oversight, certifies postsecondary institutions for Title IV participation, monitors participating institutions and takes administrative action against participating institutions that violate Title IV requirements. eCMO's purpose therefore, is to "re-engineer processes and identify how technologies used by SEC can be improved to support the management of eligibility and oversight functions" ("eCMO Overview"). The project will not change the Case Management Process Model. Furthermore, eCMO will help support decision-making and follow-through that is "informed, effective, efficient, consistent, documented, standardized, distributed and focused on integrating data." This vision for eCMO also supports FSA's organizational objective to reduce risk and is a more advanced layer of the Data Strategy vision.

SEC staff members Bob McKiernan, Chris Miller, Fred Wynn, Geneva Coombs and Randy Wolff comprise eCMO's core team, with Karen Chauvin serving as project director. As part of the conceptualization phase of the project the team identified six key issues that impact the case management teams and SEC as a whole.

- * There is a lack of complete information on high-risk schools.
- * Case team workloads can be uneven and difficult to manage.
- * Researching a school can sometimes be difficult for SEC staff members.

* Case eligibility decisions may not be as consistent or effective as they could be.

* Documentation of case work is not integrated and is not easy to access.

* Correspondence to schools about case decisions may not be consistent within or across the different SEC teams.

The eCMO project team used these findings to create an integrated and universal process for SEC's management and oversight of schools. eCMO will provide access and integration of NLSDS, FISAP, COD, ISER, GAPS and FMS information for each Title IV school, which SEC staff members can view. It will also reengineer PEPS and feature information on relevant cases, laws, documents and correspondence for each school. Furthermore, eCMO will revamp the current risk system so it is forward-looking instead of backward-looking. For example, anytime new information comes into one of FSA's SEC-related systems, eCMO will enable questionable or troublesome school information to be directly passed on to the appropriate case management team. All of these measures will help to ease SEC staff members' workload and frustrations.

"eCMO will be a valuable resource to the School Eligibility Channel," commented Chauvin. "It will help School Eligibility to achieve its mission of collaborating with partners, monitoring schools for program compliance, and operating with pride, trust and excellence."

The eCMO strategy and design were completed in September. The project team is currently working on GAPS and requirements analysis. Project implementation should begin in phases starting in 2005, and full implementation of eCMO should be completed by 2007.

For more information on eCMO, contact Karen Chauvin.

FSA in Seattle



The Region X office is comprised of 17 staff members, including the ones pictured above.

Q&A with Region X Area Case Director Susan Bowder

Which three words best describe the Seattle office? Why?
Data-Savvy, if you consider that one word. Maybe living near Microsoft has rubbed off, or perhaps it is in our overabundance of water. But, for whatever reason, the FSA staff members in Seattle seem to lead the organization in their understanding and use of data.

Experienced. We have an incredible collection of staff with a variety of experiences that work well together. People are collaborating at every turn to take advantage of their collective knowledge to achieve the best possible outcome.

Dedicated. You never know what time of the day or night you might get an e-mail or phone call from an FSA staff member in Seattle. It is often hard to tell when staff members are on leave because if there is something that needs to be done, they will do what it takes to make sure it gets done.

What is the biggest challenge Region X is currently experiencing?

We are a small group. We have six staff members assigned to the School Relations Division and 11 staff on the Seattle Case Management Team. We are located 2,768.02 miles and three time zones from Union Center Plaza. In addition, we have responsibility for the largest geographical area with the fewest number of schools, spread over multiple time zones. This all makes for lots of logistical challenges.

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Seattle Attractions

* **Points of interest:** Space Needle, Pike Place Market, Mt. Rainier, Mt. St. Helens, Museum of Flight, the waterfront, the Puget Sound ferry system, Statue of Liberty of Alki Point.

* **Theatre:** The Paramount and Fifth Avenue Theatre, which are on the Historical Register.

* **Tours:** The Seattle Underground Tour for the humorous, early Seattle stories told by the guides.

* **Etc.:** The Ballard locks and fish ladder (whatever happened to Herschel?). The Edgewater Hotel, where the Beatles fished out of the windows when they came to Seattle.



Seattle Facts

* Seattle is the northernmost major city in the United States and is actually north of Toronto and Montreal.

* Seattle has historically been the gateway to Alaska - there are more flights from Sea-Tac to Alaska than from all other airports in the lower 48 states combined.

* Seattle is the closest major U.S. city to Asia.

* Seattle's 36 inches of annual rainfall is less than Washington, DC and New York, and on average, Tucson, AZ, gets more rain during the month of August than we do. We have a lot of gray days, though.

* It rarely snows in Seattle due to the warm Pacific Ocean currents.

Bowder Q & A, con't

Describe some projects Region X staff members are currently working on.

Members in Seattle are frequently called on to work on projects related to providing technical assistance to institutions. We are involved in work with HBCU's and Tribally Controlled Institutions, New School and New FAA initiatives, and identifying training needs, including the on-line FSA Assessments. In addition, Seattle is typically the first place people call when they need data queried or analyzed. We are involved in a number of projects related to data quality and identifying patterns within our data that might suggest non-compliance with Title IV requirements.

What is the best thing about working in Region X?

Seattle is an incredible city, and we work with incredible people. What more can I say?

Seattle's Best (according to Region X staff members)

- * **Best seafood market:** The Pike Place Fish Market, which is famous for its fish throwers (it also has great produce and beautiful cut flowers).
 - * **Best coffee shop:** Believe it or not, we actually have relatively few coffee drinkers. Starbucks is enjoyed by those who like dark roast, while Tully's is the preference for those who like a lighter roast.
 - * **Best Seattle restaurant:** Ivar's (the most quintessential), Metropolitan Grill, Wild Ginger Anthony's Homeport.
 - * **Best local cuisine:** Seafood - especially salmon, crab, oysters and Ivar's clam chowder. There are many great Pan-Asian restaurants, too.
 - * **Favorite Region X college basketball and football teams:** Washington Huskies football (although the Oregon Ducks did manage to pull off more than one vote!) and the Gonzaga Bulldogs for basketball. They are the ONLY Region X team that has made it to the NCAA tournament the last four consecutive years, and they are nationally ranked this season.
 - * **The most notable Seattle native:** Bill Gates (through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation they give away a large portion of their assets - including supporting education nationwide!). We would also like to mention Jimi Hendrix, Bruce Lee (actually born in San Francisco but buried here), Quincy Jones (born in Chicago but graduated from Garfield High School and got his start here), Sherman Alexie, Gary Larsen, Richard Karn, Bing Crosby, Bob Barker and of course, "Frasier."
 - * **Best FSA regional office:** Seattle! We can see the 1914 Smith Tower, which was the tallest building in the world outside of New York and Chicago when it was built. Also, our offices are located in the tallest building on the West Coast. We have views of Puget Sound (watching the Washington State ferries come and go) with the Olympic Mountains in the background to the west, and of Safeco Field and Seahawk Stadium to the south.
- st activities:** Sailing, hiking, jogging, kayaking and canoeing.
- * **Favorite local pro sports team:** Seattle Mariners.
 - * **Best Region X mountain:** Mt. Rainier.



Jan Faucett (Frankenstein) and Lois Curtis recently dressed up and passed out candy to encourage UCP staff members to give donations to ED's CFC.

FSA Now

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Scenes from the San Diego EAC

November 2-5, FSA hosted over 1,800 financial aid professionals in San Diego for the first of two Electronic Access Conferences (EAC). The conferences provide attendees with training and updates on Title IV programs.

The theme of this year's EAC is "Getting Aid Right." The conferences feature multiple general sessions, more than 40 interest sessions, a computer lab, hands-on training, a cyber cafe and an Ask a Fed desk.

FSA will host the second EAC in New Orleans December 2-5. Currently, 1,642 people are registered for this conference. For questions on conference specifics, please visit the EAC Web site at <http://edeworkshop.ncspearson.com/welcome.htm>.

Right: These FSA staff members, representing various regional offices, worked at the Default Management booth during the November EAC.

Below: Panelists Kay Jacks, Jeff Baker and Dan Madzelan of OPE address attendees at the Federal Update general session.

Below Right: Susie Kay gives the keynote address at the EAC. Kay is founder and president of Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund, which provides college prep counseling and scholarships to inner-city high school students in Washington, DC.



Terri Shaw shows she has LSDA spirit at the San Diego EAC.



The PC lab featured all of FSA's electronic products, which conference attendees could try out.



My FSA

FSA Now talked to new Financial Partner Services Chief of Staff Tim Cameron

Q: Describe your role at FSA.

A: As the Financial Partner Services (FPS) Chief of Staff, I will work with the General Manager to fulfill the Division's mission. This will be accomplished with a broad range of responsibilities. Among these responsibilities are the identification of issues, which may impact FSA from a Financial Partners perspective; maintaining an awareness of technological advances, which can assist FPS productivity; assisting the General Manager with special projects; and responding promptly to constituent complaints or inquiries by gathering information and coordinating with staff.

Q: What do you like most about your job so far?

A: My prior positions have all been in the private sector, and this opportunity allows me to experience the mechanisms for the delivery of financial aid from a new perspective. It is exciting to begin my period of federal service at a time when there are many improvements being made with regard to how the Department works with the FFELP providers.

Q: What are your personal and/or professional goals at FSA?

A: I believe it is important to establish a professional relationship with the Financial Partner community and serve as a valuable resource for them. My aim is to create an environment that encourages the collaborative efforts that we have begun to develop between the Department and the organizations that we support. Personally, I strive to create a positive environment that motivates others to take risks, share ideas and acquire knowledge.

Q: What are the biggest challenges you face in Financial Partner Services?

A: Managing multiple priorities is probably the biggest challenge. Like FSA overall, Financial Partner Services needs to continue to provide first-rate service to the organizations we support while at the same time, working on improving the systems we use, working smarter and keeping an eye open to future changes and improvements.

Q: Tell us about your previous professional experience. How will these experiences influence your work at FSA?

A: Prior to joining FSA, I was the Vice President of Technology Services for the National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs. I have also worked for a national student loan servicer, a guarantor and a national lender/secondary market. In each of these organizations, I have focused on loan delivery and electronic processing. I was a member of the core team that developed the CommonLine and the Common Account Maintenance file formats, which are now being transformed into extensions of the Common Record, as well as the team that brought the Meteor Project from concept to production. I feel that these experiences have prepared me well for my role at FSA. A solid understanding of the challenges that our financial partners contend with will be of great value in supporting those same partners here at FSA.

Q: What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

A: In my spare time, I love to travel – especially to warmer climates! I also enjoy home renovation and remodeling projects.

Did You Know?

ED Language Assistance Volunteers (ELAV)



ConnectED provides a listing of more than 70 Department staff members who can give communication assistance in over 20 languages. These volunteers can be called upon for assistance in oral communication with both domestic and international visitors. Their activities do not cover translation of documents, such as letters or publications, or special assistance for individuals with disabilities. To find out more information on using ELAV services or becoming a volunteer, go to <http://connected.ed.gov/index.cfm?articleobjectid=52ED67F1-AED1-4C85-A12B2AA7C1662252>.



When Joe Met Joe: Communication Management Services' Joe Aiello (right) shares FSA information with Greentree Gazette's Joe Aiello. Joe Aiello, the reporter, visited UCP on November 13-14 to do a story on FSA for the Gazette's January issue.